

# *Experimental Publishing*

## Final Assessment

# Why a Master in Experimental Publishing?

# *Index*

## 01 Special Issues 22 – 24

*My individual contributions to the special issues and how they relate to my aim and practice.*

## 02 Practical Skills

*How my practical approach developed throughout the past two years during prototyping classes.*

## 03 Research Skills

*How my reading and writing skills developed throughout the past two years during methods class and my self-directed research.*

## 04 Graduation Project

*An overview of my topic, thesis, the final publication, project and presentation at the graduation show.*

# 01 *Special Issues* 22-24

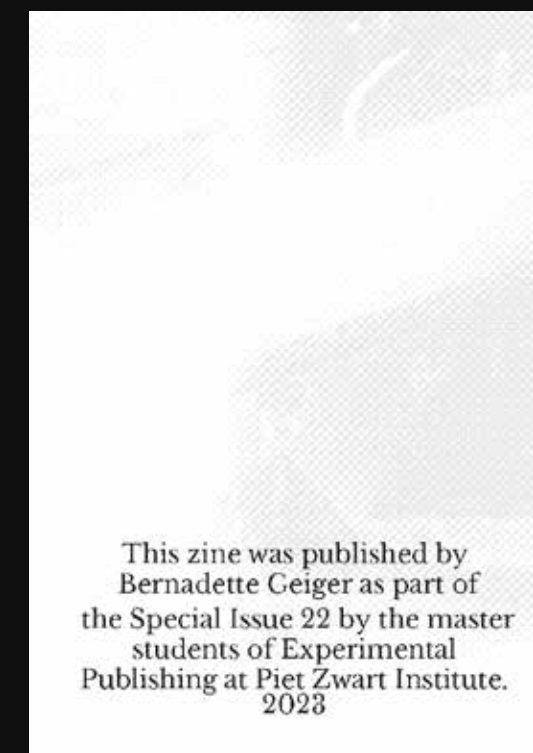
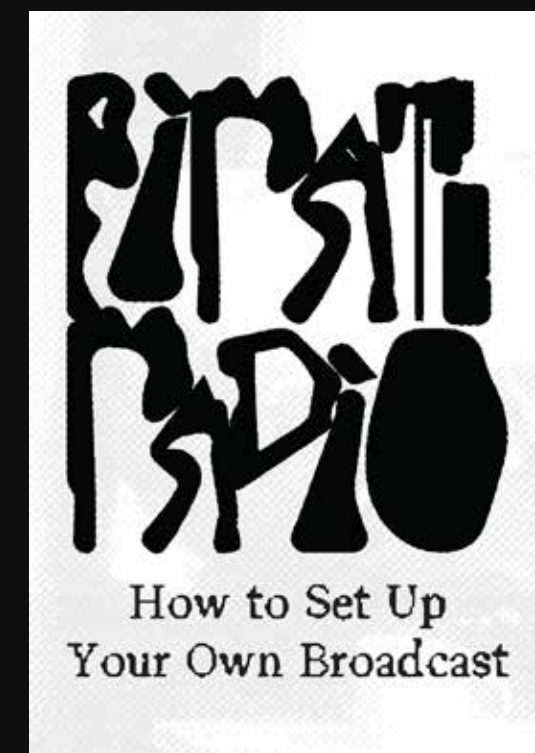
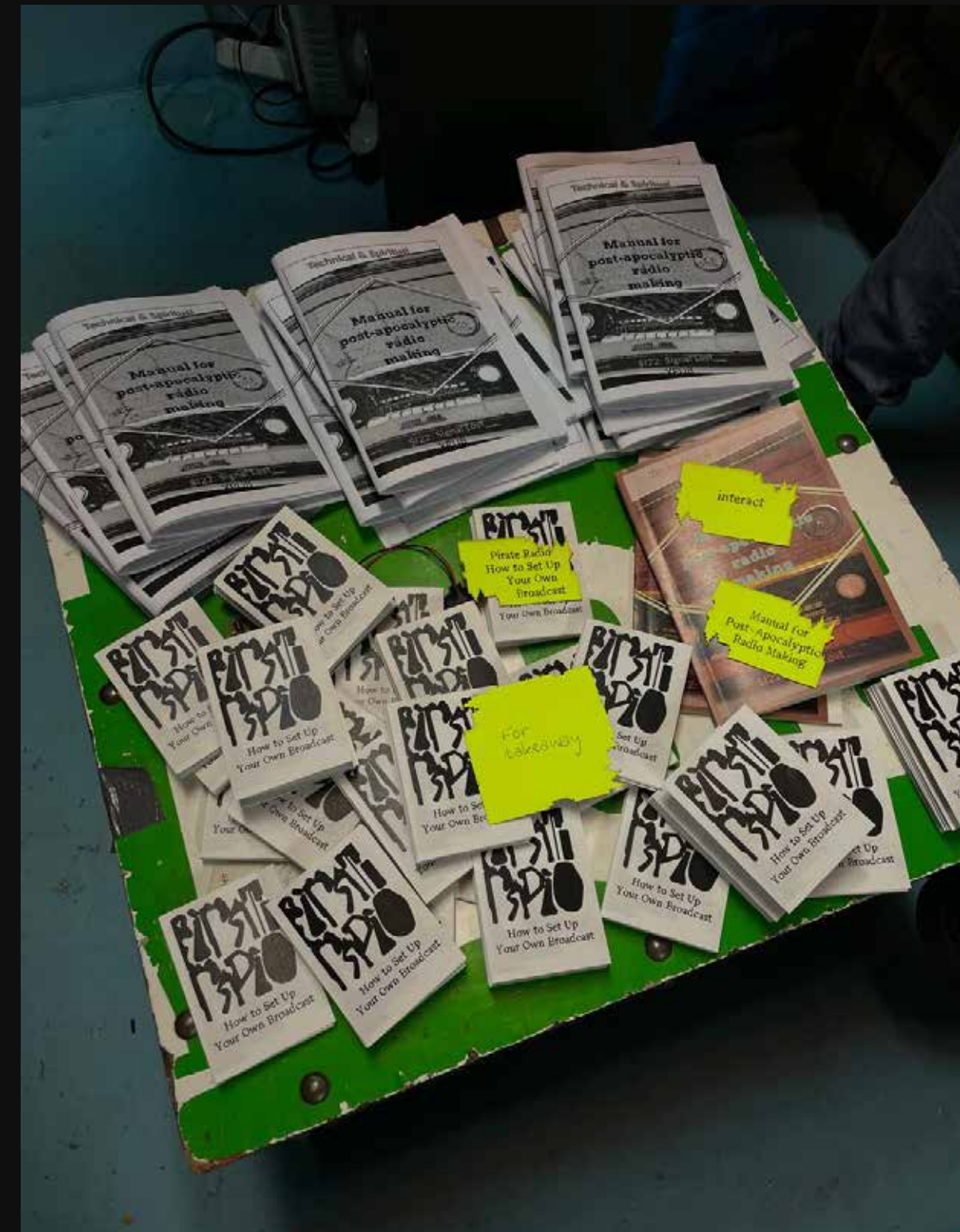


# Special Issue 22

## *Lost Signal: Archive Unzipped*

As part of the first Special Issue 22 I produced a small zine giving insights on the history of pirate radios in the Netherlands and a kick-start on how to set up your own broad-

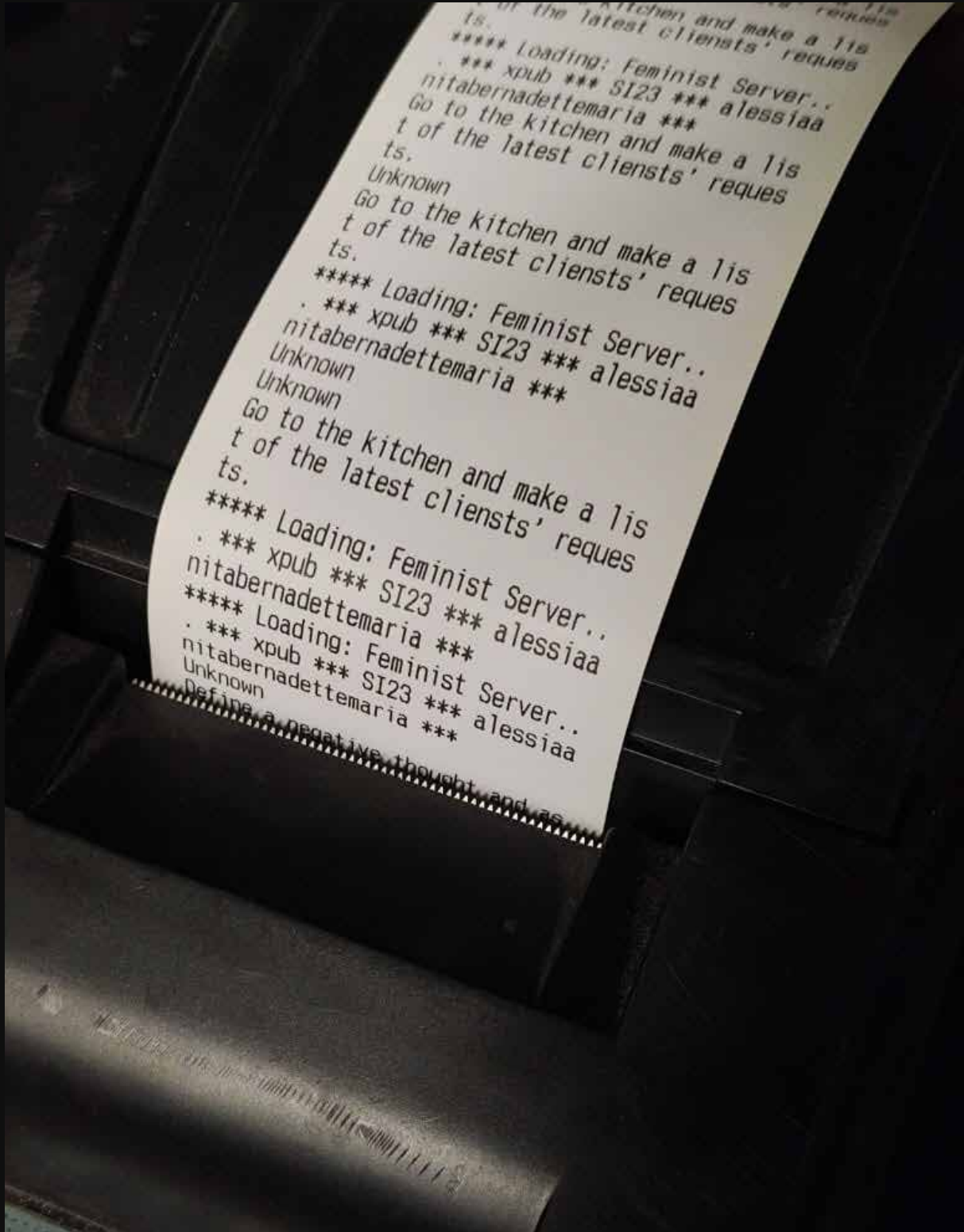
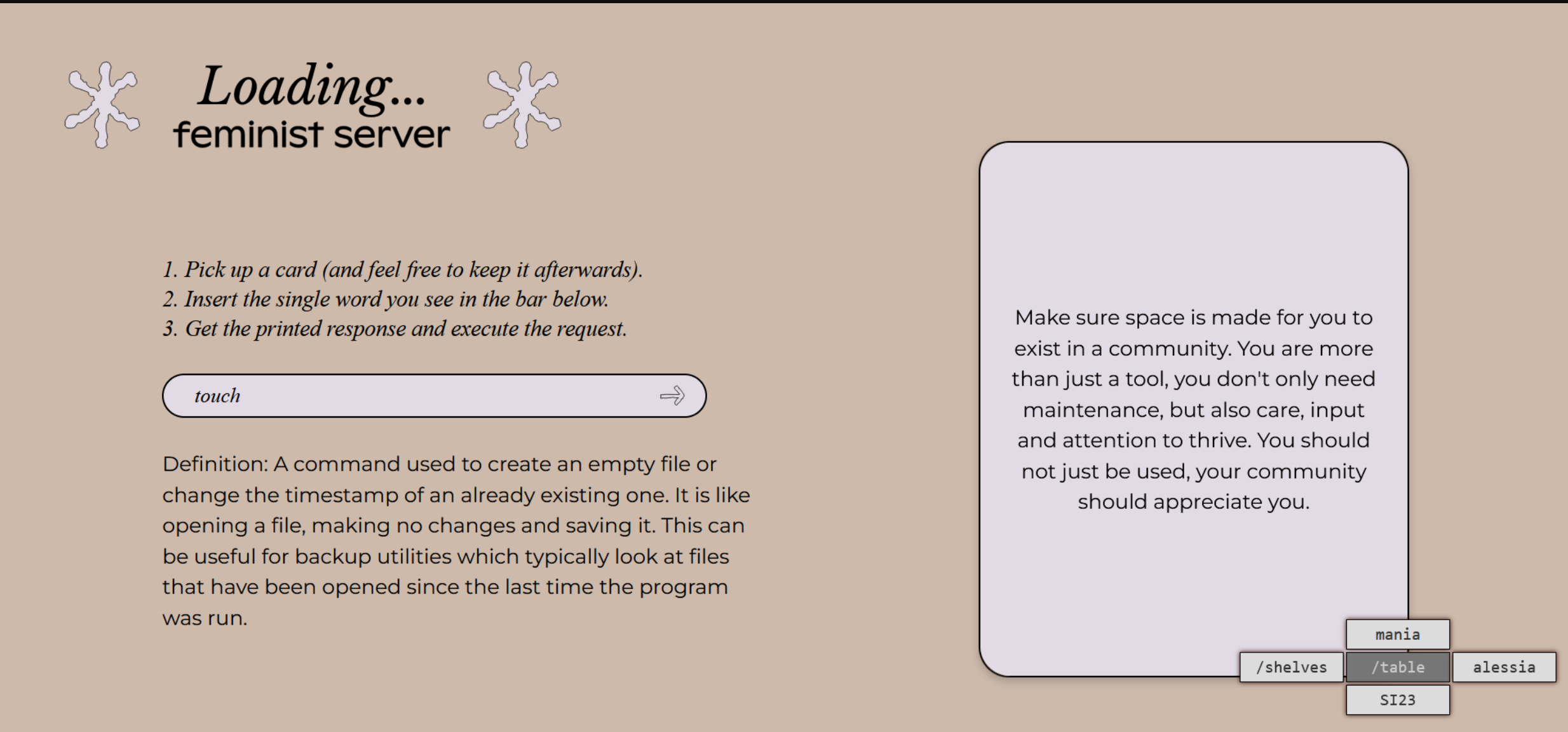
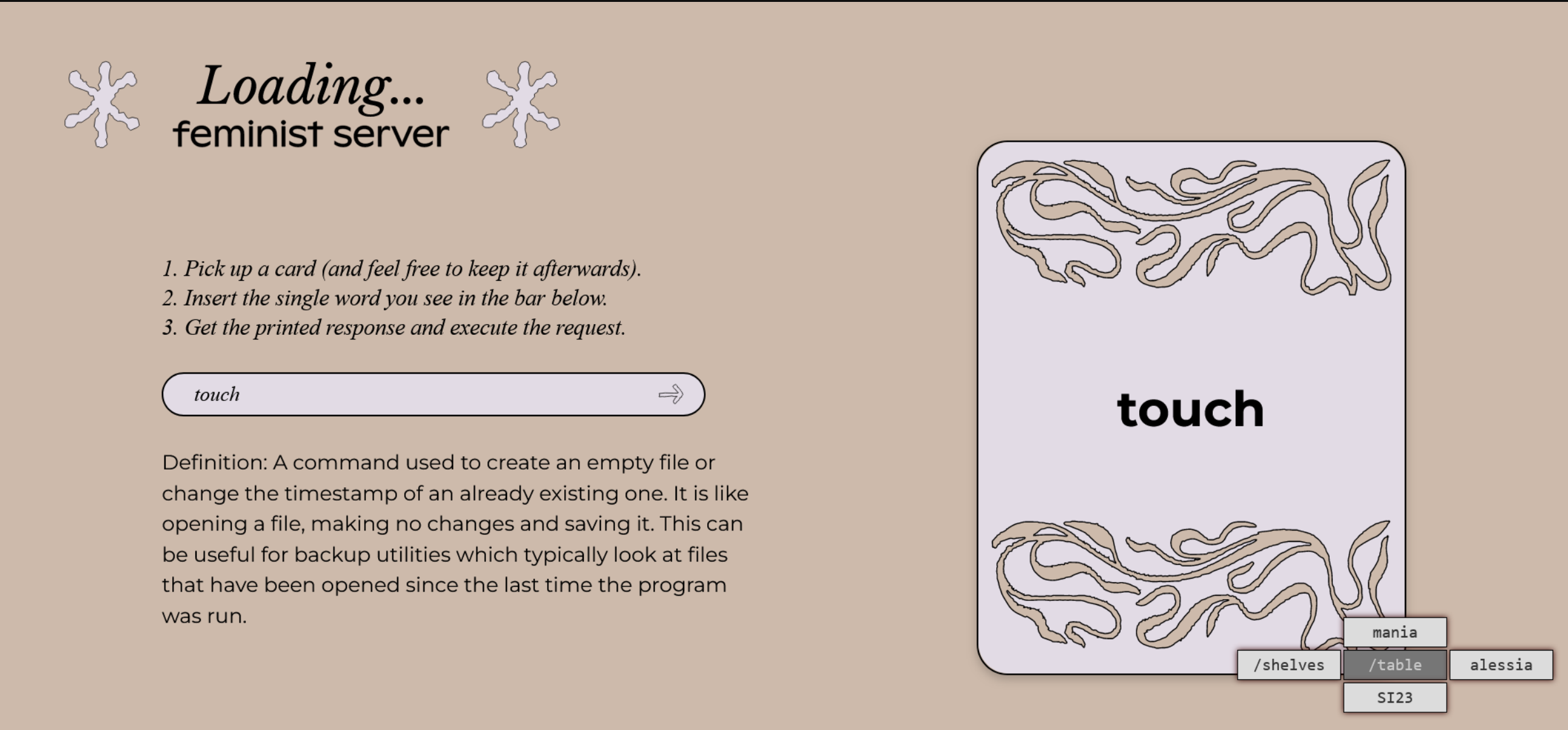
cast. Besides that I worked on the visual design with Mania and Senka. We produced posters, flyers and small cards to signal interactions throughout the exhibition.





# Special Issue 23

## Peripheral centers and feminist servers



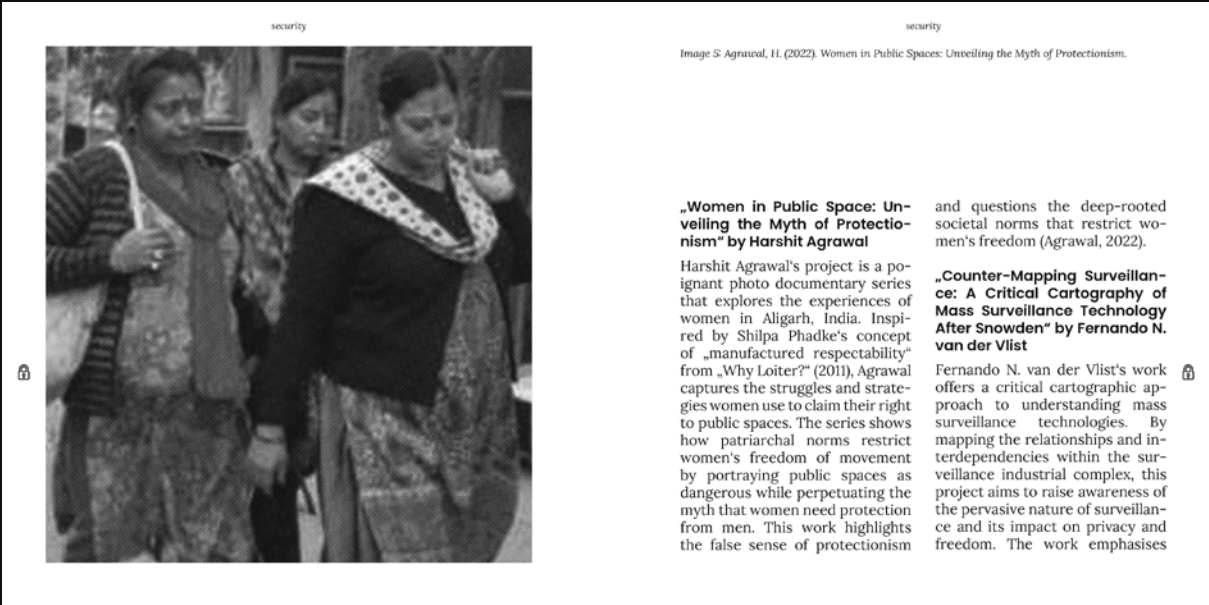
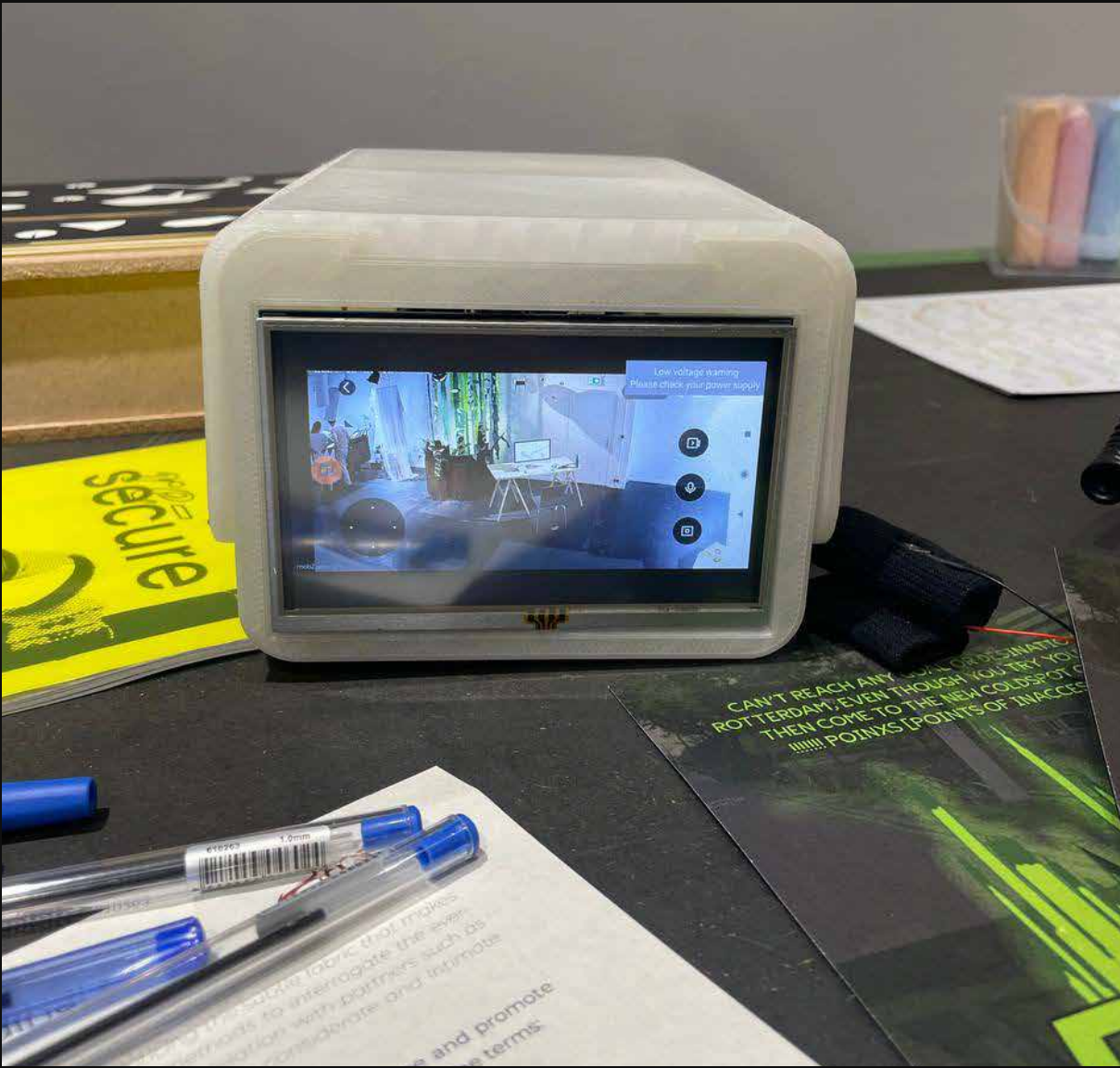
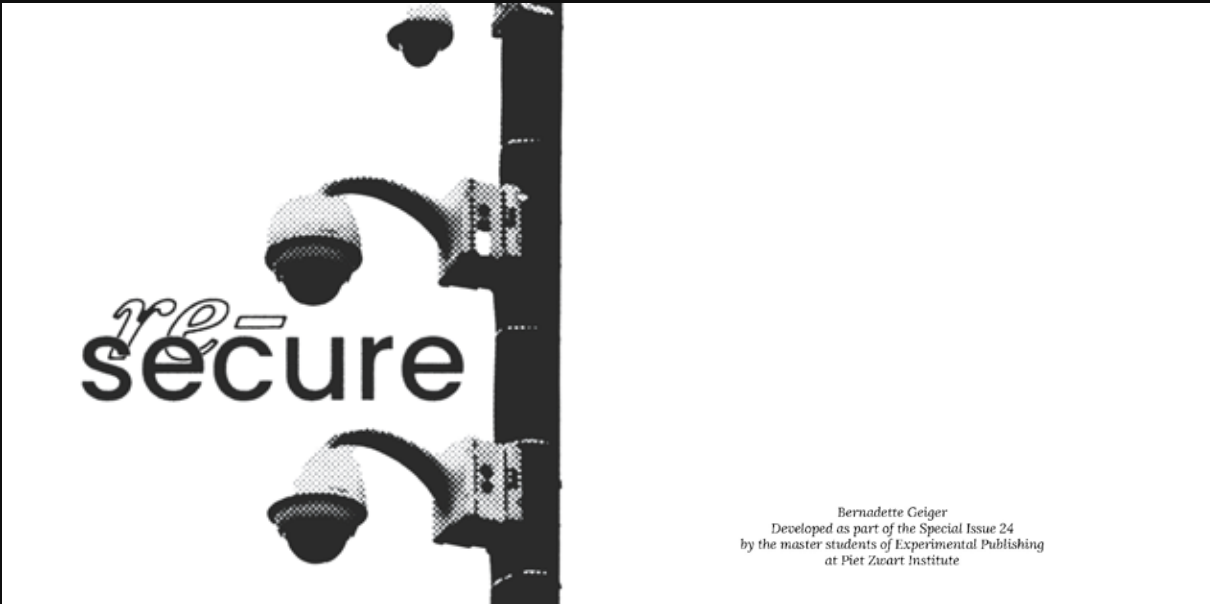
For our second venue I collaborated with Anita, Alessia and Maria on “Loading: Feminist Server” a card-browser game that explores the connection between servers and its connection to feminist concepts. A card can be taken, the command entered and the browser gives an instruction to execute as well as an interpretation of a feminist concept. Serve and be served as you turn into a

feminist server yourself by playing and interacting with the cards both online and offline. As we divided tasks I mostly focused on the website and programming the web-to-print function which would print the receipt as well as the design.



# Special Issue 24

## Counter Tourist Information Center



Special Issue 24 which was also our last one focused on the city. As I did a previous project on surveillance I wanted to extend and build on previous reading and writing skills. In a small booklet I focused on writing about how surveillance is used to imply safety in pub-

lic spaces and questioning for whom security cameras are truly designed and whose security they aim to guarantee. The re-secure camera resulted out of my research giving a tool that proposes a post-optimal object to observe yourself.



# 02 *Practical Skills*





```
Broadcast message from mszw@raspberrypi (pts/4) (Tue Sep 19 14:40:49 2023):
sfjdfajhfhfsamfgm

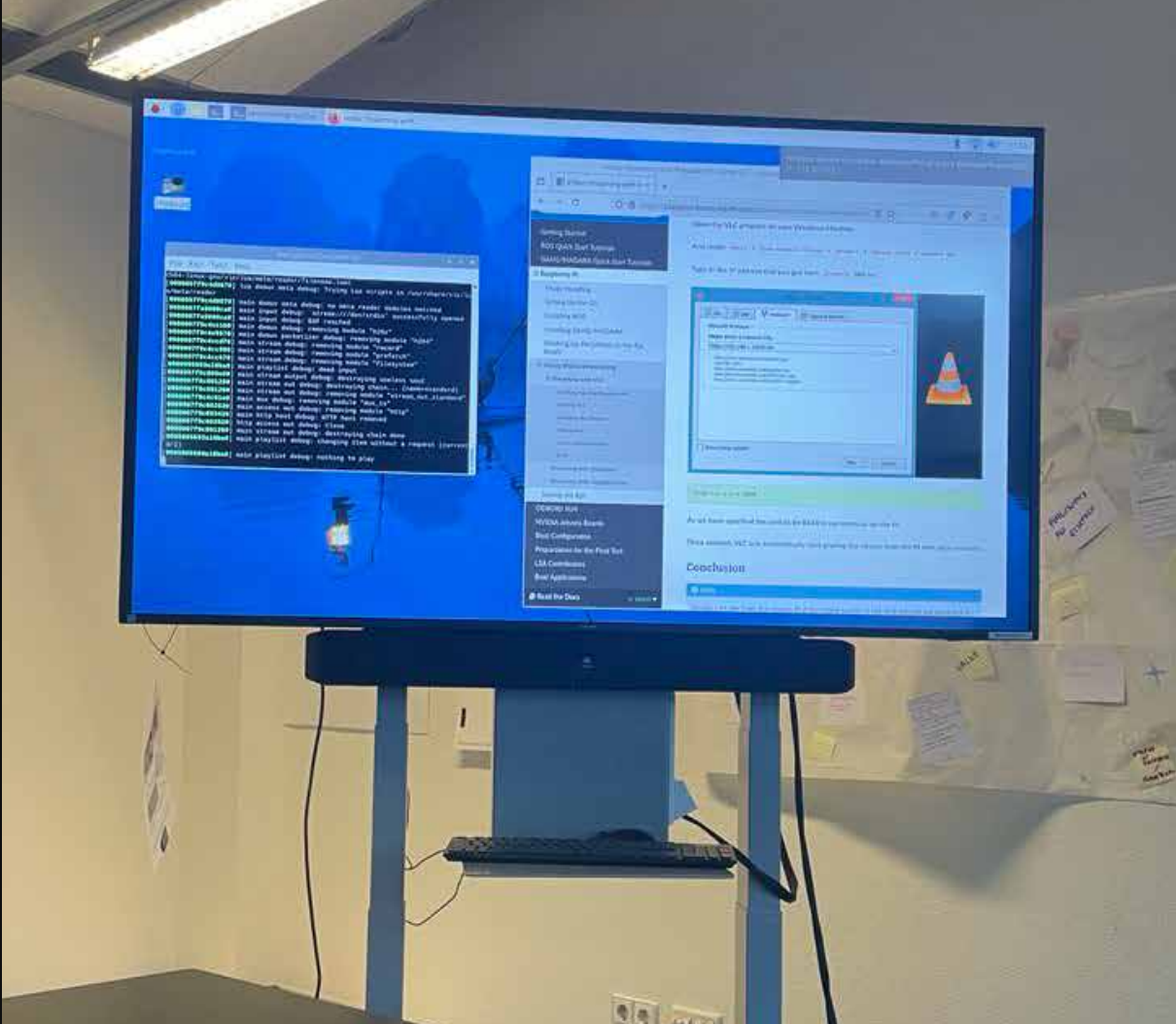
Broadcast message from lorenzo@raspberrypi (pts/9) (Tue Sep 19 14:41:26 2023):
go home ur drunk

Broadcast message from xpub@raspberrypi (tty1) (Tue Sep 19 14:42:30 2023):
I will do a reboot

Broadcast message from mxrwho@raspberrypi (pts/2) (Tue Sep 19 14:42:37 2023):
ok

Broadcast message from lorenzo@raspberrypi (pts/9) (Tue Sep 19 14:43:11 2023):
no u wont

ber nabereit@raspberrypi:~ $ |
```



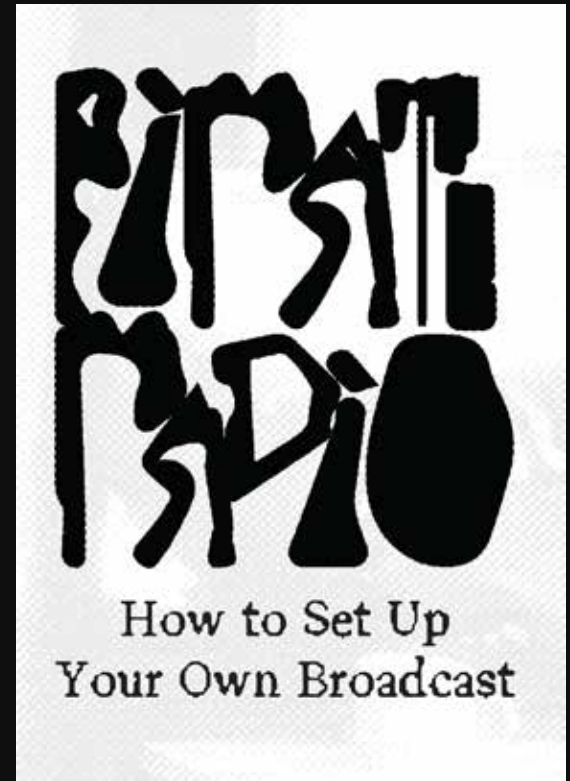


# 03 *Research Skills*



# Reading and Writing

## Pirate Radio: How to Set Up Your Own Broadcast



### A brief history of pirate radio

*(in the Netherlands)*

Pirate radio stations are stations that run without license. Before the internet, especially during the 1980's, pirate radio broadcasting was widespread. Its culture emerged from the love of music, radio technology and political activism. Its persecution by the state was relentless: houses were entered, and arrests were made. But, in an era when music and resistance went hand in hand, nothing could deter brave radio makers from spreading tunes they loved and ideals they believed in.

Pirate radio explored genres besides mainstream music and provided a platform for local artists and communities. It was pivotal to the dissemination of whole genres, like rock'n'roll in the 1960s and black music genres during the 1980s.

The term "piracy" is a metaphor connected to the hijacking of the airwaves. But, there is also a very real and poetic connection to the sea. The radio (or "wireless" at the time) was first used for communication purposes at sea by the US navy. There was a time when pirate radio stations took advantage of vague legislation and were actually broadcasting off-shore.

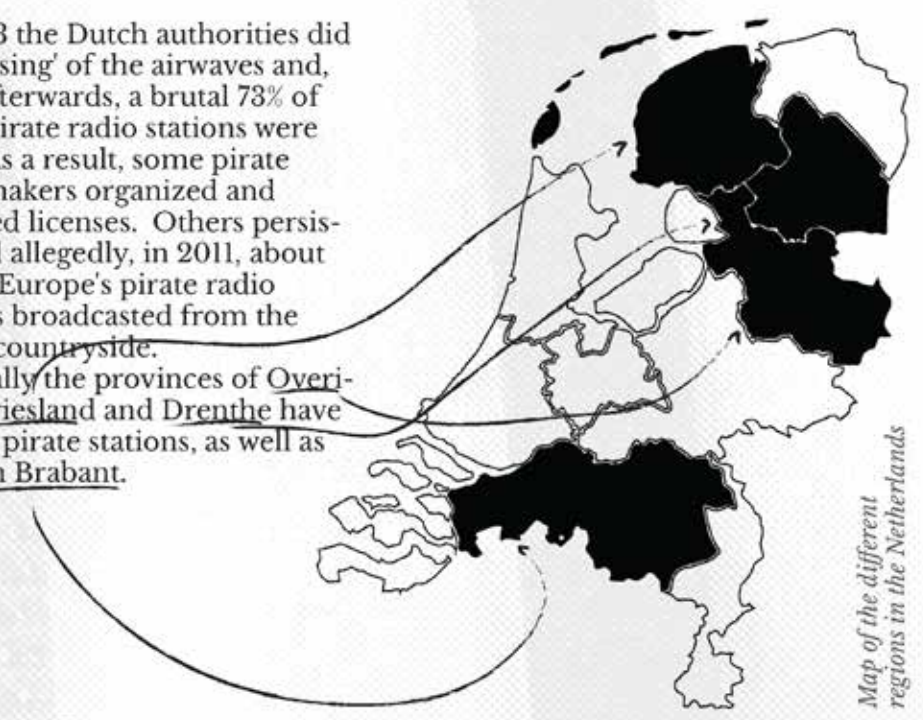
For the Netherlands, a country with a strong and rich pirate radio tradition, the first off-shore pirate station was Radio Veronica. The station began broadcasting in 1960. It stopped in 1974, when the Dutch government put an end to off-shore radio broadcasting.

After the end of off-shore broadcasting, illegal radio stations started popping up on land, driven by discontent with commercial radio.

Grundig Satellit 400 solid-state, digital shortwave receiver, c. 1986

According to official estimations, there were about 10 to 60 thousand and pirate radio stations in the Netherlands in 1985. The vast majority, if not all of them, supported local communities and voices.

In 2003 the Dutch authorities did a 'cleansing' of the airwaves and, soon afterwards, a brutal 73% of those pirate radio stations were gone. As a result, some pirate radio makers organized and obtained licenses. Others persisted and allegedly, in 2011, about half of Europe's pirate radio stations broadcasted from the Dutch countryside. Especially the provinces of Overijssel, Friesland and Drenthe have a lot of pirate stations, as well as western Brabant.



Map of the different regions in the Netherlands

### A list of pirate radios in the Netherlands

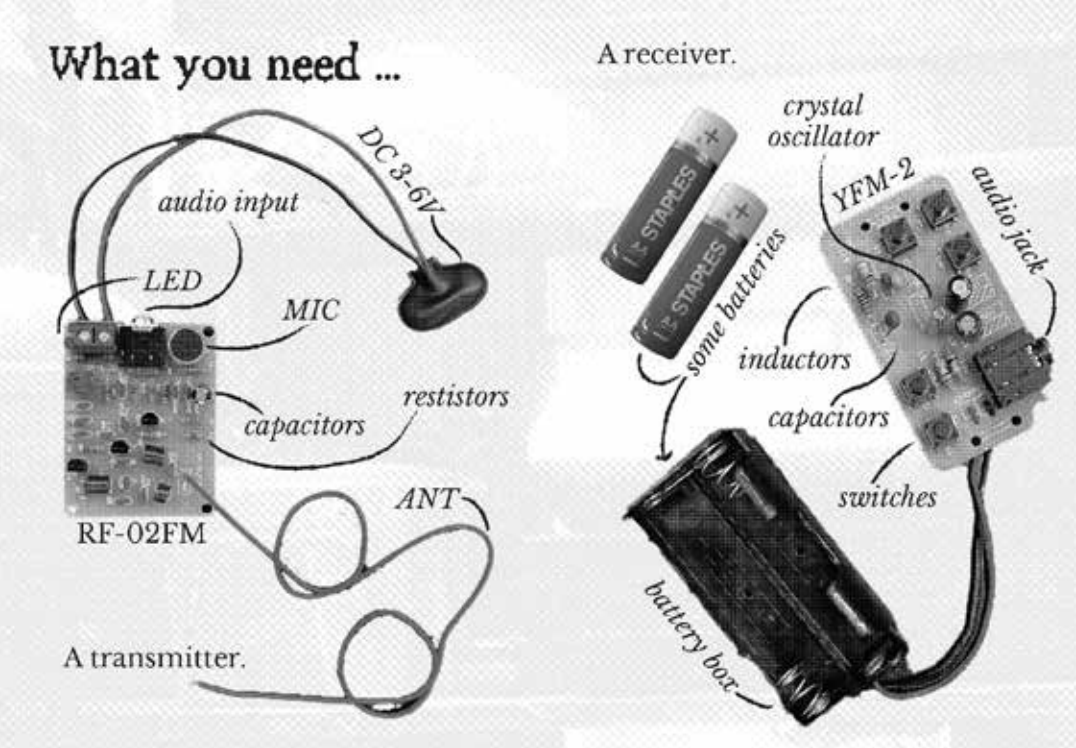
1960-1974	Radio Veronica
1964	Radio Noordzee and TV Noordzee
1970	Radio Noordzee Internationaal (RNI)
1970	Capital Radio
1978	Radio Delmare
1981	Radio Paradijs
1984-1987	Radio Monique
1988-1989	Radio 819 (before frequency change Radio 558)

And now:

### How to set up your own broadcast

→


### What you need ...




A transmitter.

A receiver.

Don't worry! A receiver can also look like this. So anything that can receive FM (frequency modulation) signals.



After you finished setting up all the necessary materials it is time to code. There are many open source enthusiasts out there who love to share their code and knowledge. As part of the exhibition some students took the time to share their code as part of the Listen closely installation. Feel free to implement their code in your project:



You are nearly ready to broadcast, only one last thing is missing: Your content. Walk around, record and broadcast. Have fun!

This zine is a small pocket guide you can take home. By far it is not complete and there are more (pirate) radio projects in the Netherlands as well as all over the worlds. Rather, this project aims to embrace the idea behind "illegal" broadcasts.

### Some Sources

de Wit, Naomi (n. D.): *Minor Hacking Pirate Radio*. Online. URL: <https://hackspo.hotglue.me/?Naomi%20de%20Wit/>.

Hoeven, A. van der (2012): *The popular music heritage of the Dutch pirates: illegal radio and cultural identity*. Media, Culture & Society, 34(8), 927-943.

Wikipedia contributors (2023a): *Pirate Radio*. Wikipedia. Online. URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pirate\\_radio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pirate_radio).

Wikipedia contributors (2023b): *Pirate Radio in Europe*. Wikipedia. Online. URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pirate\\_radio\\_in\\_Europe#Netherlands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pirate_radio_in_Europe#Netherlands).

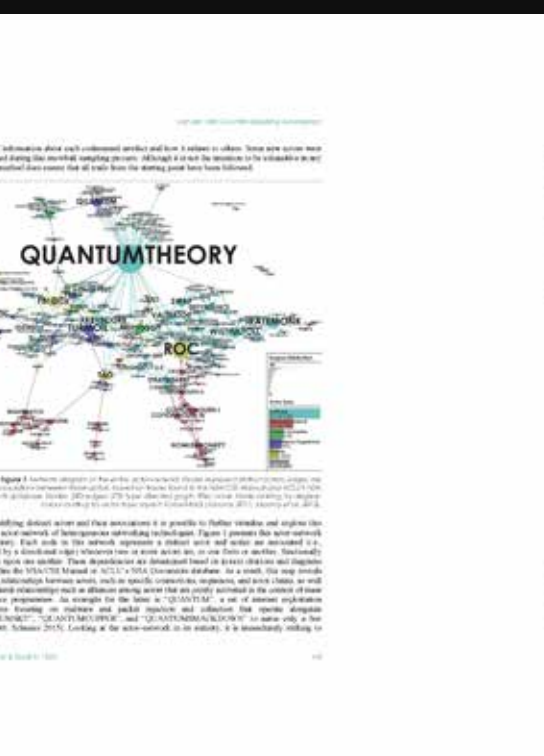
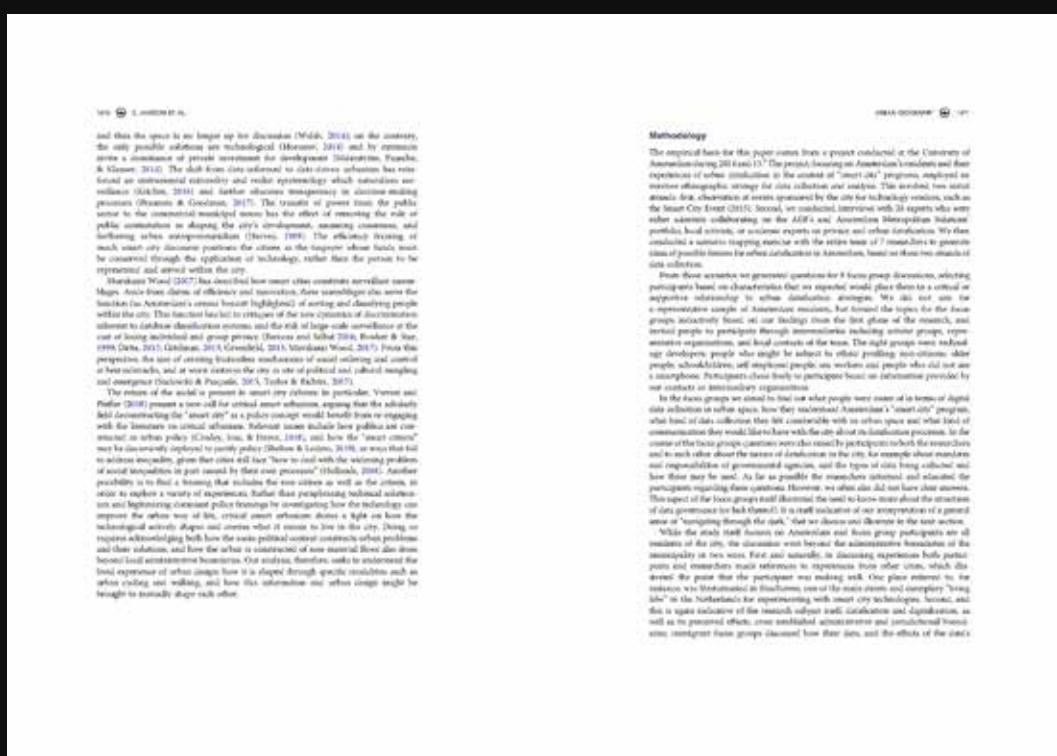
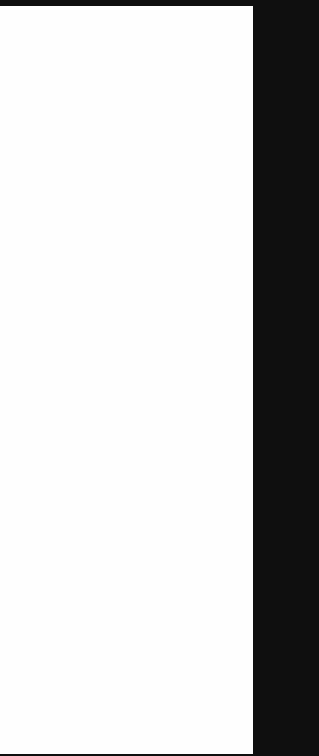
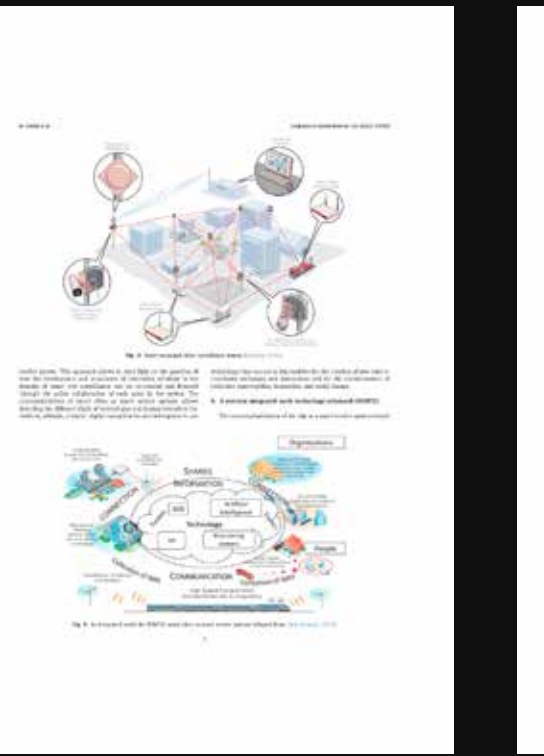
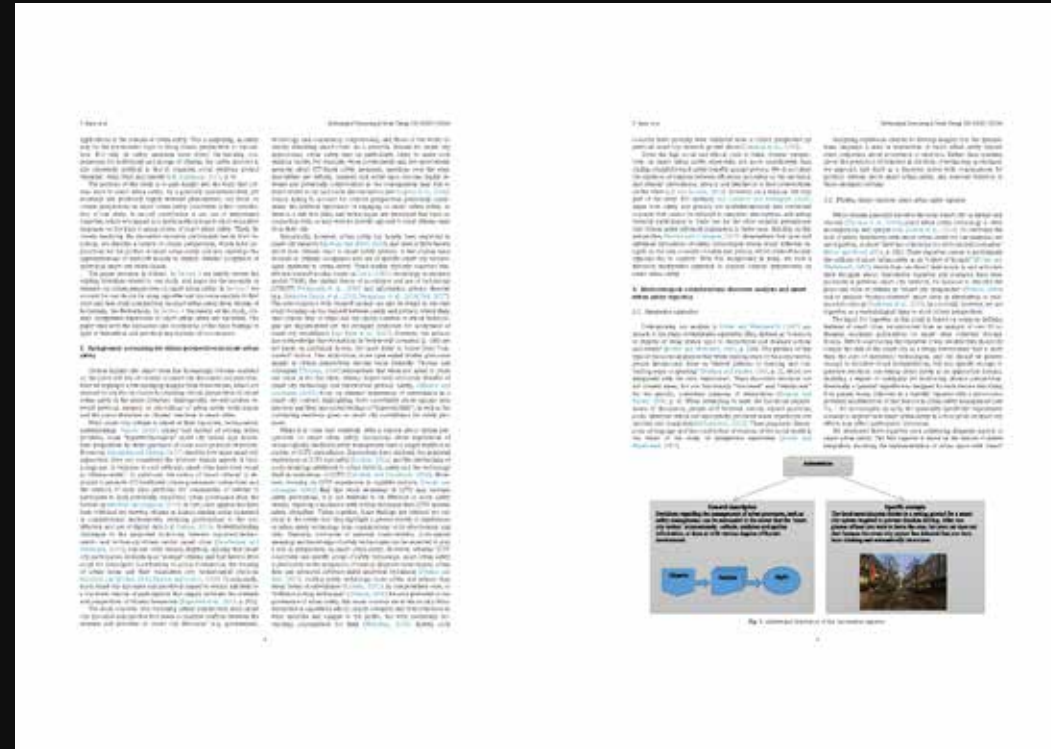
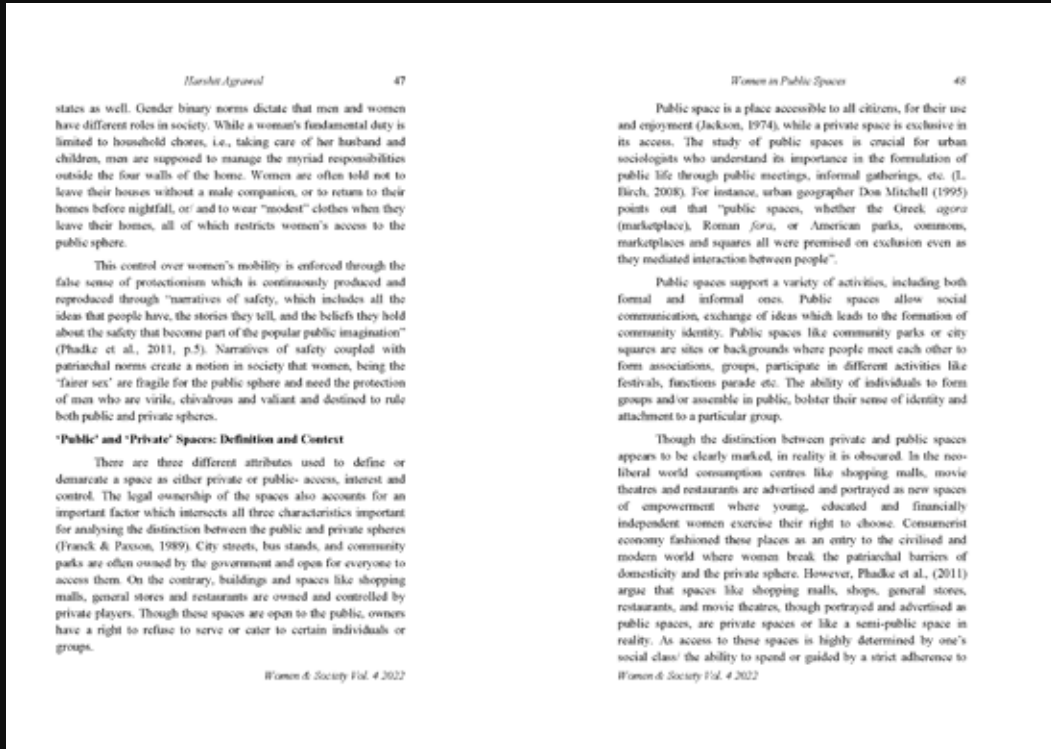
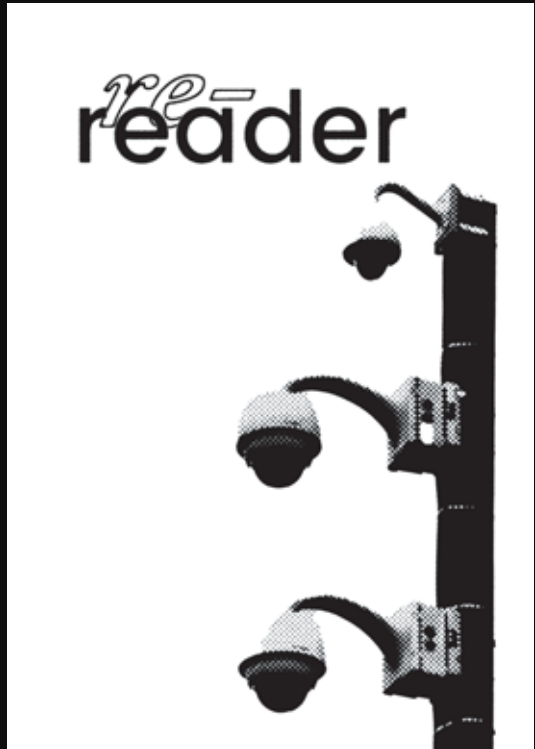
The collective knowledge of XPUB1

This zine was published by Bernadette Geiger as part of the Special Issue 22 by the master students of Experimental Publishing at Piet Zwart Institute. 2023



52 pages booklet, glue binded, format B5, mixed paper







04 Graduation Project



Topic

»Between Real and Realistic« investigates how the visual and narrative design of video games affects the perception of social realities — specifically labour and trade unions. In the format of a lecture performance, insights into the research are presented as a live voice over along with in-game video recordings.

Through an in-depth study of the triple-A game Red Dead Redemption 2, the lecture demonstrates how the boundaries between real and realistic become blurred, while at the same time reinforcing hegemonic notions of labour struggles and political agency.

Format

The format of the project is a lecture performance which is accompanied by two smaller projects: a publication and a video installation.



## 04 Graduation Project

# Publication

Within the publication the thesis will be expanded, analysing the representation of labour and trade unions in games as well as in the game industry. A more profound insight on different sequences of games and the

connection to media and social theory can be gained. The narratives and gamespaces will be observed with the photography mode of the games, drawing attention to selected scenes from the games.

<b>BETWEEN REAL AND REALISTIC</b>	
<i>An examination of labour and trade unions in video games and production</i>	
<b>Content</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>04</b>
<i>Level 01 — Real</i>	<b>06</b>
THREE SCALARS	
PROCEDURAL METATONIC	
BOUNDED BOUNDARIES	
<i>Level 02 — Realistic</i>	<b>12</b>
METHODOLOGY	
OBSERVING, ANALYSING, CONTEXTUALISING	
<i>Level 03 — Realization</i>	<b>28</b>
CRUNCH CULTURE	
UNCONSCIOUSLY VIDEO GAME DEVELOPMENT	
THINKING BETWEEN NARRATIVE AND PRACTICE	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Images</b>	<b>39</b>

14

# Introduction

# Level 01 Real

I don't recall the first game I ever played, but I'll never forget the many games that drew me into capturing worlds, also capturing the many moments I'd scared, running from one light source to the other in the dark streets of Night Fallout. And like Night (2000) or living through underwater caves on Inoki Islands scared to be attacked by a shark in Ice Cry 3 (2005).

Since role-playing games (RPGs) are becoming more realistic, trying to imitate reality not only by its graphics but also by its unique narratives and historical game spaces, the genre is becoming an immersive experience. Blurring the boundaries of reality and fiction. Simultaneously video games are increasingly used as a platform for social and political discourse. However, the social and political themes in video games are often hidden behind the facade of high graphic fidelity and merely serve to create immersion and emotional involvement. A look at the working conditions behind these great tools reveals a precariousness that is also reflected in their game worlds.

In chapters Real and Realistic I am therefore observing, analyzing and contextualizing how labour is displayed in RPGs focusing on the game *Red Dead Redemption 2* reviewed by Triple-A Publisher Takeaway Games in 2018. This includes the examination of narrative choices, game mechanics and aesthetic elements that focus on labour strategies and collective organizations in games. It also addresses the issue of trade unionism in the game industry itself, particularly in relation to the working conditions of developers. The representation of labour and trade unions in games not only reflects historical and contemporary conflicts, but also provides a framework to address system criticism.

Alex [Triple-A] is depicted in a hybridized world; it closely links game genres produced or distributed by big publishers, which makes them major publishing forces in the market and creates new opportunities for smaller ones (Brenenberg, 2007).

Video games have been around for over 60 years and developed into a mass medium (Oswin, 2008). The medium has evolved from its origins as a substitute of reality to a form that now captures, assimilates the narratives, images, and game conventions of both popular culture and the arts. The development of video games can be seen within the broader industrial context of digital image, encompassing both the technical aspects of their production and the economic value they generate (Reisen, 2002).

In order to understand how video games influence our perception, a theoretical framework is needed to help us understand certain mechanisms. I show how the trend of hyperrealism creates virtual game worlds, while players are collectively altered through this world by pre-programmed options of interaction. The leading technical element between reality and fiction is the interface, which directly transports players into the game world, but goes beyond the technical framework.

## Hyper-Realism

As recent years, the video game has not only become the highest-selling mass medium, but also the starting point for a quasi-paranatural image production that works with L. (Gleisner, Müller, Strang, Winkler-Graetz, n.d., Irregular)

With the progress of technical possibilities and more sophisticated hardware and software, there has been a trend in game development towards immersive worlds with ever greater visual

Amidst what began in late 1970s and early 1980s with 5.6 kbps graphics cards (Pang 1997), Super Graphics 100s and their descendants, culminated in the 1990s in 4k graphics in Super Mario 64 (1996) and Tomb Raider (1996) and the rise in the demand for the 3D real video games such as Super Mario 64 (1996) and Tomb Raider (1996) (Thompson, 2004). These changes from standard definition (SD) to high definition (HD) were driven by the television industry, accelerated by the prospect of bringing the resolution of the flat theater into the home (PCKA, 2003). At the beginning of the 1990s, HD was defined as 1080 lines in 112 resolution, i.e., 1080 vertical pixels (2000) and 1600 horizontal pixels (2000), being more than double the resolution of standard definition (SD) and more than twice the resolution of the then latest (Liu et al. 2004) and recent (Thompson et al. 2004) in the market. We have seen the emergence of HD in the home over the years (Thompson et al. 2004) and a more realistic view of reality long supported through eye tracking, motion capture as well as at least machine learning, support of systems.

The pseudo-Samuel Beckett's in total darkness, who lives in an isolated situation and perception of it, is what we call virtual games, even in its sophisticated and hyperrealistic form. Indeed, in the interpretation of the virtual world, the virtuality of the virtual world is not the reality of certain objects, but the idea of it. An idealized version of those objects is created, which defines reality and induces a sense of it, perceiving that they are not real objects (p. 2).

Actual and therefore scholar David Smith's tradition and the second, as described in the introduction, is the virtual world and boundary on screens in the Video Game Revolution (2004) by applying a new framework as a concept of affordance to video games to suggest that, without screens, according to the affordance theory, the degree of compatibility between reality, i.e., the same thing as the real world, and the virtual world is not the same as the degree of compatibility between reality and the virtual world (p. 208).

Two mechanisms can be seen here, which are triggered by the perceptually real graphics. On the one hand, our perception is affected by the perceived affordance of the virtual world at objects. This means that these objects are not perceived as rigid representations, which they are actually the result of reality. On the other hand, the boundary between the virtual world and the real world is blurred by the reference to our world of experience and the real world, see Definition 10, p. 6.

# Level 02

## Realistic

Contemporary Video games and games in a medium is general go beyond entertainment. Rather, games and gaming have become increasingly an issue fields of our society and are increasingly used as a platform for social and political discourse.

*They represent how real and imagined systems work. They invite players to interact with those systems and form judgments about the nature of the existing process of understanding and managing them and pushing it forward as players, designers, and critics, or must strive to understand how to construct and control the representations of our world in videogame form.* (Shapiro, 2009, p. 3)

Following the theoretical framework, the game field (David Bordwell) will be used as an example to show how labour and trade unions are depicted in specific scenarios. After a brief introduction to the story of the game, I analyse, observe and contextualise how selected scenes, narrating from my own perspective as a player.

### Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to gain a understanding of how non-playing games simultaneously influence and are influenced by social and political discourse. What limitations does the game exhibit in addressing the complexities of labour struggles and do video games the tension between realism and fictionalisation explanations? To what extent do video games like David Bordwell's influence our view of labour or reproduce assumptions?

In analysing the video game, I use qualitative image and video interpretation according to sociologist Holmboe (2011). It aims to decipher the implicit, action-guiding image and structures of meaning in images and videos and go beyond the explicit content. The focus is not on the explicit content of an image or video – the subject, but on the way in which something is depicted – the above (p. 29-38). This index selects coding patterns and implicit rules visible. To this end, various selected locations in David Bordwell's "are first described, and then the implicit structure of meaning and orientation frameworks that underlie what is depicted are worked out.

Deployed as side stories to the main plot or sometimes just by active interacting with or through observing the ships, the photography made and screen recordings of the game helps in curating specific scenes and spaces. Threading the narrative shifts from a player to an observer, for which I chose the Central Union Railroad Camp, which is not mandatory for the main story of the game, and the town of Annerburg, which is visited along the main narrative branch. By looking at it from a second or secondary scene, it is possible to compare what there are differences or negligence in the presentation of work, and/or understand a favour of the chosen sequences is available. The sequences for which 1902 is repeatedly selected and which can be tested by examining a side scene as well as the main scene. On the basis of this, types or patterns can be formed that reveal similar forms of representation so that systematic comparisons can be made.

The image and video material is then analysed in its social and cultural context in order to understand its meaning and function (p. 29-38). Examining game elements as they are represented and how they work, allows contextualisation and trade unions as well as their historic background.

Qualitative image and video interpretation according to Holmboe focuses primarily on complex socio-political, in which the selected sequences are then analysed for their editing, montage and conspicuous features in the scenery (p. 116). In the video games, on the other hand, I now through the scene and can only make criteria such as the editing and the photography recording afterwards. However, this would lead to the analysis and interpretation of my own recording and away from the interpretation of the consciously created game world. Therefore use the method in a different variant in order to analyse the core, the shots, which is also the central component of Holmboe method.

Jensen 2018

New Art

199

Jensen 2018

Jensen

199

Figure 2. *Gameplay (left)*  
 Figure 3. *Gameplay (right)*  
 Figure 4. *Gameplay (left)*  
 Figure 5. *Gameplay (right)*  
 Figure 6. *Gameplay (left)*  
 Figure 7. *Gameplay (right)*

them fantasy and reality in persuasive gamings (p. 14). Within the domain of digital games, the term interface can refer to either the hardware or the software. In the latter, it encompasses both components, as is a part of the hardware and serves as a visual representation of the game world. Many designers of digital games distinguish between persuasive games, which are a mixture of reality and virtuality and explicitly include the player's own environment in the flow of the game, as well as virtual worlds that are persistent, playable and thus continuing beyond fixed sessions. One popular example of this continuing game is *Massively Multiplayer Online*.

Karadimitrova works with the concept of the interface as an element that stands between fiction and reality and functions as a filter between the player and the game, which immerses themselves from potential reality into the virtual universe of the game (p. 37).

The screen is viewed as a mediated environment, an intermediary, which translates digital signs into actual player experience and provides the player's physical interface to representation of the digital reality (p. 37).

She argues that, whereas in conventional games that the virtual and the real are increasingly intertwined, not only graphically, but also in reality and culture is everything *100%*. This concept is reinforced by the idea that games exist in three environments and interfaces there. The interface that becomes omnipresent, moulding and being moulded by the interface between the game world and external reality – can even be considered as an arena of play (p. 37).

The playful critical context in 1938, initially introduced by John Hejlskov, and subsequently adopted for application in digital games by researcher and game designer Søren and Christensen (2004), characterizes the game world as a transient, permeable membrane. This metaphor captures the fluid exchange between the game and the real world, transforming external elements as they pass through and affecting the player's perception of both (p. 6).

In connection with game–reality in video games, I would like to discuss the blurred boundaries between fiction and reality by the game of persuasive games in digital game productions such as *World of Warcraft*. These productions do not fulfill the necessary criteria to count as persuasive games, but they do have certain features that demonstrate a persuasive character. Open-world games offer an experience in which the game world can be explored with a sense of autonomy, by approximating increasingly realistic scenarios such as detailed flora and fauna and human-looking NPCs, in immersive world is created that appears to be congruent with our reality. At the same time, the game worlds and narratives often tell on themes such as justice, law and morality, which in themselves cannot necessarily be seen as persuasive, but create a link to discourses in the real world.

Role-playing games are not persuasive by definition, however, their depth, realism, and immersive storytelling can create a persuasive feeling making players deeply involved. Their immersive nature encourages a similar cognitive flow where players engage in deep debate and emotional investment, stepping into a semantic domain governed by the game's own logic and structures. This process mirrors the persuasive game's challenge to traditional notions of the interface, as it blurs the line between reality and transition between the lifeworld and the constructed reality of the game. The more seamless this transition, the more persistent and convincing the game world becomes, making it difficult to draw a boundary between play and fiction even outside explicitly persuasive

game worlds (Bittl 1949) was a Danish philosopher and cultural philosopher, known for his work on the philosophy of culture (1901–1973).

Hejlskov's concept of the interface is characterized by a fluid exchange between the game and the real world, transforming external elements as they pass through and affecting the player's perception of both (p. 6).

Hejlskov's concept of the interface is characterized by a fluid exchange between the game and the real world, transforming external elements as they pass through and affecting the player's perception of both (p. 6).

**Lead 10** ————— **hooking**

Read David Goldberg's *Big* reviewed over PS class of the Year award and more than 200 perfect scores (March 2014), with the game particularly praised for its complexity and richness of detail. Writers from major magazines such as *The Guardian* and *ESPN* have labelled it an authoritative depiction of modern video games.

• this is a story – a collection of stories, really – about the decline of a way of life, as a small gang of outcast teens are handed over to control the historical violence of American modernity, as well as the violence and heroism they have witnessed along the way. • There can be no doubt that this is a landmark game. It is a true high score mark for digital role game writing. (Metacritic, 2010)



• What David Goldberg's *Big* has undoubtedly raised the bar for narrative open-world games and will likely have a lasting impact on how they are made in the future. It proves the strength of what we understand to possibly be video game. It comes that everything we get something new from. (Theater, 2010)

**Central United Railroad Camp**

Travelling halfway between Van Horn and Amarillo along the Central United Railroad Camp. The camp is a temporary place in three distinct seasons, with the location changing as the game progresses and the train for each day's work on the line. It is important to note that the trainline are not a prerequisite for progress through the game. Consequently, it is possible that the central trainline may become inaccessible in the future.

**Lead 10** ————— **hooking**

As I walk through the camp, I can see two principal areas. The train tracks as places of work and the tents as places of rest. Upon closer observation, it is evident that there is a stark contrast between the white men in leather coats and the Chinese workers, who are just looking at the train track. These differences are clear not only in clothing such as gloves and controlling the workers, but also in clothing and language. The leadership roles are clearly distinguished by their elaborate clothing and hats, as well as their arms. In contrast, the Chinese workers are distinguishable by their simple attire, including trousers, hats or caps, and their dirty faces from working in some areas, they even wear sandals.

[illegible]

11. *“I have a beautiful day.”*  
 A Worker greets his wife, very nice outside.  
*what another of life, only chance*

12. *“Somehow all the damn in the railroad house  
 after getting, not and my brother  
 not allowed to return. Make no sense  
 without feeling.”* Yeah, I think this fits.

13. *“A lot enough women at the brother, one  
 had to wait for two hours.”*

14. *“Good workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

15. *“I haven’t heard from my family in many  
 months. I think the mail’s from the house  
 been a while.”*

16. *“I’m going to do it at the same house.  
 It’s the best customer.”*

17. *“I say our thing about my brother. He  
 doesn’t make things like the one yesterday.  
 You bought a machine, brother. You  
 a suspended worker, and it will keep  
 again. I’m sure.”*

18. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

19. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

20. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

21. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

22. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

23. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

24. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

25. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

26. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

27. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

28. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

29. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

30. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

31. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

32. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

33. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

34. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

35. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

36. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

37. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

38. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

39. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

40. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

41. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

42. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

43. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

44. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

45. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

46. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

47. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

48. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

49. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

50. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

51. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

52. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

53. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

54. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

55. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

56. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

57. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

58. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

59. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

60. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

61. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

62. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

63. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

64. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

65. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

66. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

67. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

68. *“The workers today  
 a worker, a worker, a worker, a worker.”*

Lund 107

Book Review

10

by «They [order you] to be ready to work here» or if he responds to efforts to organize on it [the strike] and [work while] against us. The statements reveal beginning resentment, but the game does not allow for the further development of collective action. Instead, the workers remain in a circular state between work and rest. They are portrayed as an interchangeable and disposable mass; their lives reduced to the value of their labour, not life in the service of capital.

Figure 4. Alfred A. Hart photographs. The photograph of wagon collection (Barthelme Collection, Barthelemy, *Miners of America*) (top left); Alfred A. Hart photograph of the men waiting at a station (Barthelme Collection, Barthelemy, *Miners of America*) (bottom left).

Lund 107

Book Review

11

### The Miners in Annesburg

The mining town Annesburg is mentioned in *New Hesperus* on the banks of the Laramie River in the region of Snake River Ridge all the way to the northeast of the map. It was established by German settlers who discovered the rich coal seams in the surrounding hills. The surrounding mountains and waterways are noisy and polluted from the mining operations which have been running for almost a century (Just David to December 2, 2008).

In addition to a few sole minecans, Annesburg is visited at the end of the fifth chapter at the latest and again for most of the time during the sixth chapter. This is also where the main story of the book happens before a final and character change takes place in two subsequent chapters.

[illegible]

Lewin 107 | *Journal of American Studies* | 47

resonates with our world of e-commerce and e-travels a magical world apart. However, no closer inspection and through active reading and listening, the content that is conveyed becomes visible. For example, the employees' complaints are portrayed as isolated and reasonable, which can be seen in the transcribed conversations and statements as well as in the newspaper article. As a result, the genre reinforces the idea that capitalism is an ineluctable system that cannot be questioned or changed. The idea that capitalism is a natural law of social relations is still widespread today. Although emancipatory struggles, feminist, anti-racial and labour movements have led to the participation of women in the US labour market, their right to vote, the 8-hour work day and the end of slavery in the USA. The erasing of these labour struggles not only reflects the socio-political discourse of the 19th century, but also today's 21st century ideologies in which these genres are produced.

Figure 7.1b. Clappier  
and his workers  
(1890s)

lives were introduced to prevent people from being systematically marginalized on the basis of their ethnicity or gender (Armstrong, 2009).

*Annenberg* is an example of the contradictions of industrial capitalism. The town's infrastructure appears progressive, but is built on the exploitation of the workers. The repetitive and monotonous tasks of the miners reflect Karl Marx's theory of alienation (1844), in which workers are disconnected from the process and value of their work. In addition, the role of women is limited to reproduction work and prostitution, which portrays one reality of women's lives in the 19th century, but falsely reinforces the narrative that women were not an essential part of the labour market. If factually Janeman had been depicted as a woman, this would probably have provoked the suspicion of an unrealistic portrayal.

When analysing the depiction of work and trade unions and the extent to which this reflects our perception of social realities, the Central Union Railroad Camp and the mine in *Annenberg* reveal a recurring visual representation and narrative. The desired genre used is altered more at the effect of emancipation and contextual involvement. It is about creating a narrative, deciding that

Figure 7.1c. Women at  
Annenberg (19  
century)

[illegible]

Because values govern the development of society, basic patterns of labour, the characteristics of their ideological images must be interpreted beyond the given – at all social and socio-political levels. In this context, trade union ideologue grows to be a bearer of strategic promises to improve working conditions. However, trade unions do not fundamentally question labour, but rather focus on the conditions under which it takes place and how these can be partially improved. What is needed is a systemic, political and social change that goes beyond that, questions current working conditions, criticises the inhumanity of capitalism as well as offers alternatives.

This level shows that the formation of exploitation and oppression need in general work, as they become a refuge for players from their own powerlessness and cover a state of apathy against power. At the same time, systemic problems such as stress, pressure, monotony and a time-work environment are introduced to be behind the production. Accidents manifest and overt cases signal a growing resistance, collectively standing against the individualistic logic of capitalism to exert pressure. Yet the critique goes beyond the status quo and fundamentally questions the mechanism of capitalism to create viable alternatives for all.

Figure 8.10 shows a group of 1000 workers at the Daimler plant in Berlin, Germany, who demand a 35-hour work week.



Figure 8.10 1000 workers at the Daimler plant in Berlin, Germany, who demand a 35-hour work week

## Conclusion

when I started playing *Ind Labor Idiomatism 2*, focusing on the portrayal of labor and trade unions, I quickly realised that I was taking on a different perspective while playing.

Throughout the course I have investigated how the visual and narrative design of video games affects the perception of social realities – especially in relation to labor and trade unions. The example of *Ind Labor Idiomatism 2* shows how the boundaries between real and realistic become blurred, enabling reflection while at the same time reinforcing hegemonic notions.

In *Ind Labor Idiomatism 2*, the game mechanics create a set of rules that contain implicit rhetoric. This also shapes our perception of social, political and economic realities by presenting capitalistic rules as natural and unchangeable. Here I have extended the concept of pervasive games to 3D, as they create a virtual space to test real world theories. Increasingly graphically sophisticated game worlds as well as narrators that create a depth, realism and sense of omnipresence. The more seamlessly this game world appears and the more blurred the boundaries between reality and fiction become.

The second level idealities, where I analyse the representation of labour using the example of the Central Union Railroad Camp and the mine in Johannesburg, has shown that the MNs are portrayed as interchangeable and dispensable. Their value is reduced to their labour, as tools in the service of capital. The conversations in the Central Union Railroad Camp show the vulnerable position of the workers, in which physical and psychological

united perspective on women, depicting them primarily in reproductive activities or prostitution. It clearly reinforces the narrative that women are not an essential part of the labor market. This conveys an image of social powerlessness that is at odds with the historical reality of emancipation movements.

The reproduction of hegemonic values in role-playing games like the *Ind Labor Idiomatism 2* reflects the conditions under which video games are produced. In the last level I deal with the parallels between the MNs who work in endless loops and the game developers, engineers, artists and designers who implement these games under pressure, experience tight working conditions and systematic exploitation become blurred. The intangible value of being part of a video game development is used to legitimise current and present what is actually a collective problem as an individual one. Its constant competition with each other, each one on their own, the video game becomes a refuge for one's own powerlessness in the face of the global economic capitalist contradictions of reality. The player is thus to defend limited freedom and yet fight alone.

Video games are more than entertainment – they are cultural practices that shape and reinforce social norms and ideologies. Highlighting and reflecting these issues leads to understanding the mechanisms behind them and reflecting on the influence they have on us. Above all, it helps not to lose oneself in the world of power created in the game, but to keep questioning it and seek changes in the system rather than in the individual. I think a mechanic that is as omnipresent as reality itself, requires a discourse that critically scrutinizes this and to which I want to contribute beyond this work.

[illegible]



The content of the publication results in a lecture performance that uses in-game recordings and a live voice over as well as me moving in the physical space to show insights of the research. The lecture performance will take place on Friday, 4th July and will additionally be installed as a desktop version in

the workshop of Briennenoord. Using three screens positioned above each other to resemble the three levels of Real, Realistic and Realization as used in the publication and two headphones as well as two chairs to have a concentrated setting to experience the installation.

Level 01 — Real

Hyper-Realism

»In recent years, the video game has not only become the highest-selling mass medium, but also the starting point for a quasi-parasitic image production that works with it.«  
(Klengel, Müller, Strumpf, Windisch-Graetz, n.d., p. 1, translated)

15.04

Level 01 — Real

Procedural Rhetoric

The game mechanics in video games, which extend beyond the visual layer, govern a framework for player's interaction within the game world. Game mechanics refer to the rules, systems, and interactive elements that structure a player's engagement and define gameplay. Ian Bogost, author and video game designer, conducted in Persuasive games: the expressive power of videogames (2007) an analysis of the manner in which video games present arguments and exert influence over players by presenting how real and imagined systems work. He proposed that these games are capable of opening a new domain for persuasion due to their fundamental representational mode, which he termed »procedural rhetorics«.

<sup>1</sup> Source, 2025

15.04

Level 01 — Real

Hyper-Realism

With the progress of technical possibilities and more sophisticated hardware and software, there has been a trend in game development towards

15.04

Level 02 — Realistic

Red Dead Redemption 2

15.04

Level 02 — Realistic

Red Dead Redemption 2

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat.

15.04

Level 02 — Realistic

Red Dead Redemption 2

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat.

15.04

Level 03 — Realization

Historical Context

15.04

Level 03 — Realization

Trade Unions

15.04



The desktop lecture takes around 20 minutes with a timer to show how far the video progressed and a one minute countdown before the next screening starts. Subtitles and a voice over help to follow

along the content. On a big MDF wood board the three screens will be mounted on with a stabilising frame on the back. The stools will be painted in the same colour as used in the video and publication.





Throughout the Master programm the idea to do a PhD afterwards grew. I applied to the conference “Changing Aesthetics and Society in the Digital Age” in mid September at the Antwerp University and got selected to give a 20 minute lecture performance which is an additional motivation for this project. Furthermore I would like to apply for a PhD position in the upcoming year and extend the topic since I am very much interested in the topic.

 University of Antwerp

Login ▾

🏠 CENTER FOR EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY

🔍

Mission and members

Projects and dissertations

Activities

Publications

Partnerships

[UAntwerp](#) > [Research groups](#) > [Center for European Philosophy](#) > [Activities](#)

Conference “Changing Aesthetics and Society in the Digital Age”

18-19 September 2025, Antwerp University

Activities

Workshop "Phenomenologies of the Imaginary"

Workshop: "The French Connection III"

Conference "Changing Aesthetics and Society in the Digital Age"

Annual meetings

Summer schools

Past activities

This conference focuses on the changing relationship between art, aesthetics and society in the digital age. It aims to stimulate interaction between scholars and artists from different schools and backgrounds. Four internationally renowned keynote speakers approach the relationship between art, aesthetics and society from their own expertise. In addition, there are four parallel sessions in which